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BECHUKOSAI בחוקותי

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

INSIGHTS INTO THE WEEKLY PARSHA

BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

Dedicated to

Emmanuel (Mendel) Karp

1905 - 1989

son of Bernard (Berl) and Rose (Rezele)

Manny Karp was the first of his family born in the United States, in 1905. His first language was Yiddish. Losing his mother to the Spanish Flu shaped his resilience and commitment to helping others, ultimately leading to a career as a guidance counselor in Philadelphia public schools. He also served many years as the director of Camp Akiba in the Poconos.

Karp's legacy is characterized by his optimism and unwavering dedication to learning and mentorship. Emmanuel Karp died in 1989.

BECHUKOSAI I | בחוקותי א

Adapted from a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Behar-Bechukosai,* 5716 (1956)

Introduction

It seems paradoxical: The Creator and Sustainer of all existence, the Omnipotent One who spoke and the universe came into being,[1] makes requests of His creations. What could humans possibly offer God?

This apparent paradox lies at the heart of the opening verse of *Parshas Bechukosai,* "If (*im*) you follow My statutes..." The word *im* (translated as "if") in this context is not merely establishing a condition but is, as our Sages teach, an expression of entreaty. G-d is not simply commanding but asking, imploring the Jewish people to follow His path.

This Divine request reveals a profound truth about our relationship with G-d. He desires our partnership in perfecting creation. Our decision to carry out His will is essential to His cosmic plan.

G-d never requests without also empowering. His entreaty carries within it both a command and a promise. When G-d asks us to fulfill His will, He simultaneously provides us with the ability to do so and assures us that we will ultimately succeed. As the *sichah* explains, the verse can be translated as "Would you follow My statutes" which communicates G-d's plea and a guarantee that we will eventually fulfill it.

This dual nature of Divine entreaty – request and assurance – extends to all *mitzvos*. When we recognize that G-d's requests are also promises, we approach His commandments not as burdens but as opportunities – Divine invitations that carry with them the certainty of our eventual success and the abundant blessings that follow.

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1. Cf. *Tehillim* 33:9.

When G-d Requests and Promises

What G-d Asks For

1. This week's Torah reading begins, אִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ. *Im,* the opening word, is commonly understood as meaning "if." The phrase would thus be translated as, "*If* **you follow My statutes…."**[1] However, **the Talmud**[2] **explains that,** in this instance, ***im*** **is "solely an expression of entreaty"** – G-d implores that we follow His statutes.

True, **in many other verses, *im* is translated as "if," connoting a condition. Indeed, in this Torah reading as well,** there are several instances where the term carries this meaning, **as in the verse,**[3] **"If you do not listen to Me…" and "If** you despise My **statutes…."**[4] In this opening verse, **however, it is a plea. G-d, as it were, entreats the Jewish people, "Would you follow My statutes."** More particularly, "Would **you follow My statutes"** is an appeal **that we toil in Torah study.**[5]

By making **this appeal and** issuing **this commandment,** G-d **also empowers and promises every Jew that "you *will* follow My statutes."** Since we have been given the promise,[6] **"No one will be [forever] estranged from Him,"** as we will all ultimately fulfill His request of us.

א. דֶער אָנְהוֹיבּ פוּן דֶער סֶדְרָה אִיז, אִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ. זָאגְט דִי גְמָרָא[א], אֵין אִם אֶלָּא לְשׁוֹן תַּחֲנוּנִים. דָאס הֵייסְט אַז דֶער טַייטשׁ פוּן אִם דָא אִיז נִיט אַ תְּנַאי "אוֹיבּ", ווִי אִין אַ סַךְ עֶרְטֶער און אוֹיךְ אִין דֶער פַּרְשָׁה גוּפָא, וְאִם לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי, וְאִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי גו׳, נָאר - תַּחֲנוּנִים, דֶער אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטֶער כִּבְיָכוֹל בֶּעט זִיךְ בַּיי אִידְן אַז: בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ, שֶׁתִּהְיוּ עֲמֵלִים בַּתּוֹרָה[ב].

און דִי בַּקָּשָׁה און דֶער צִיוּוּי גִיט אוֹיךְ אַ כֹּחַ און אִיז אוֹיךְ אַן הַבְטָחָה, צוּ יֶעדֶער אִידְן, אַז בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ, ווִי עֶס שְׁטֵייט[ג], לְבִלְתִּי יִדַּח מִמֶּנּוּ נִדָּח.

What Love Includes

2. These two aspects – commandment and promise – are also found in the *mitzvah* to love G-d. Regarding the verse,[7] **"You shall love (*ve'ahavtah*) G-d your L-rd," the Alter Rebbe**[8] **offers two interpretations: a) You *should* love [G-d]; b) You *will* love [G-d].**

ב. דִי צְווֵיי עִנְיָנִים - צִיוּוּי און הַבְטָחָה - גֶעפִינֶען מִיר אוֹיךְ אִין דֶער מִצְוָה פוּן אַהֲבַת ה׳. אוֹיפְן פָּסוּק וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת ה׳ אֱלֹקֶיךָ, טַייטשְׁט דֶער אַלְטֶער רֶבִּי[ד] צְווֵיי פֵּירוּשִׁים: א) דוּ זָאלְסְט לִיבּ הָאבְּן. ב) דוּ וֶועסְט לִיבּ הָאבְּן.

1. *Vayikra* 26:3.

2. ***Avodah Zarah*** **5a. See also *Toras Kohanim* on this Torah reading.**

3. *Vayikra* 26:14.

4. Ibid. 26:15.

5. ***Rashi,*** **on** *Vayikra* 26:3, **based on *Toras Kohanim.***

6. ***II Shmuel*** **14:14.**

7. *Devarim* 6:5.

8. ***Torah Or,*** **p. 86c.**

There, too, both interpretations are interconnected. The commandment from Above also empowers the Jewish people and serves as a promise that they will attain feelings of love, as explained above.

The love of G-d is the root of all 248 positive commandments, including the *mitzvah* to fear G-d, which itself is the root of all 365 negative commandments.[9] Thus, loving G-d serves as the root of all 613 commandments.

Just as *ve'ahavtah,* loving G-d, comprises both a commandment and a promise, so too all 613 commandments, which are included in the verse, "Would you follow My statutes, observe My commandments, and fulfill them," are both commands and promises that we will ultimately carry out G-d's will.

און אויך דָארְטְן זַיְינֶען בֵּיידֶע פֵּירוּשִׁים פַארְבּוּנְדְן אֵיינֶער מִיטְן צְוַוייטְן. וָוארוּם דֶער צִיווּי מִלְמַעְלָה אִיז אוֹיךְ אַ נְתִינַת כֹּחַ און הַבְטָחָה, אַזוֹי ווִי אוֹיבְּן דֶערְקְלֶערְט.

אַהֲבָה אִיז אַ שֹׁרֶשׁ אוֹיף אַלֶע רְמַ"ח מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה, אַרַיְינְגֶערֶעכְנְט אוֹיךְ דִי מִצְוָה פוּן יִרְאַת ה', ווֶעלְכֶע אִיז אַ שֹׁרֶשׁ אוֹיף אַלֶע שְׁסָ"ה מִצְוֹת לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה[ט]. קוּמְט דָאךְ אוֹיס אַז אַהֲבַת ה' אִיז אַ שֹׁרֶשׁ אוֹיף אַלֶע תַּרְיַ"ג מִצְוֹת.

אִיז פּוּנְקְט ווִי אוֹיף אַהֲבָה אִיז דָא אַ צִיווּי און הַבְטָחָה, אַזוֹי אוֹיךְ אוֹיף אַלֶע תַּרְיַ"ג מִצְוֹת - ווֶעלְכֶע ווֶערְן נִכְלָל אִין פָּסוּק, אִם (לְשׁוֹן תַּחֲנוּנִים און אוֹיךְ הַבְטָחָה) בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם.

When No Boundaries Exist

3. There is an additional interpretation of the phrase, "My statutes" (*Bechukosai*) – that it refers not to toiling in Torah study, but to observing the commandments.

There are three categories of commandments: *mishpatim* ("judgments"), *eidus* ("testimonials"), and *chukim* ("statutes"). *Mishpatim* are commandments that human understanding would have obligated even if the Torah had not commanded them. *Eidus* are commandments that our understanding alone would not have obligated, but once the Torah commanded them, our minds can appreciate their significance. *Chukim* are commandments that are beyond our comprehension entirely, for example, the prohibitions against *sha'atnez* (wearing garments of mixed wool and linen), the red heifer, and the like.

ג. נָאךְ אַ טַיְיטְשׁ אִיז דָא' אוֹיף בְּחֻקֹּתַי - אַז דָאס גֵייט אוֹיף מִצְוֹת. אִין מִצְוֹת זַיְינֶען דָא דְרַיי סוּגִים: מִשְׁפָּטִים, עֵדוֹת און חֻקִּים. מִשְׁפָּטִים זַיְינֶען דִי מִצְוֹת ווֶעלְכֶע דֶער שֵׂכֶל וָואלְט אַלֵיין מְחַיֵּיב גֶעווֶען, אֲפִילוּ אוֹיבּ דִי תּוֹרָה וָואלְט עֶס נִיט גֶעהֵייסְן; עֵדוֹת זַיְינֶען דִי מִצְוֹת ווֶעלְכֶע שֵׂכֶל אַלֵיין וָואלְט טַאקֶע נִיט מְחַיֵּיב גֶעווֶען, אָבֶּער נָאכְדֶעם ווִי תּוֹרָה הָאט זֵיי גֶעהֵייסְן, הָאבְּן זֵיי אַן אָרְט אִין שֵׂכֶל; חֻקִּים זַיְינֶען דִי מִצְוֹות ווֶעלְכֶע הָאבְּן קֵיין אָרְט נִיט אִין שֵׂכֶל, ווִי מִצְוַת שַׁעַטְנֵז, פָּרָה אֲדֻמָּה, און דָאס גְלַיְיךְ.

9. See *Tanya,* ch. 4. See also the *Peirush* (*Rambam, Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 2:1).

The verse speaks of "My statutes" (*Bechukosai*), although it actually refers to all commandments. This hints that even the *mitzvos* in the categories of ***eidus*** **and *mishpatim*** **– although there is room within intellect** to understand why they should be fulfilled – **should be fulfilled** not only because of their aspects that can be understood by our minds,[10] but **out of acceptance of G-d's yoke. Just like the fulfillment of *chukim,*** all *mitzvos* should be carried out in the spirit of the expression,[11] **"I have decreed a decree, I have issued an ordinance,"** "you have no permission to question it."[12]

Although the *mitzvos* are being fulfilled not because of our **understanding but out of our acceptance of G-d's yoke, nevertheless,** we derive pleasure from doing so. **Indeed, the pleasure** to which this mode of service leads **surpasses** the pleasure experienced when fulfilling *mitzvos* based on our comprehension.

As is well known,[13] there is a difference between **a faithful servant,** who appreciates the greatness of his master and fulfills the master's desires according to his understanding, **and a simple servant,** who obeys out of the acceptance of his master's yoke. The pleasure the simple **servant** experiences in fulfilling his master's will is even greater because his **pleasure is the pleasure of his master.**[14]

This concept is alluded to in the term "you shall follow" (***teileichu,*** which literally means "you shall proceed"). **Although we are discussing "My statutes"** (***Bechukosai***) – the fulfillment of *mitzvos* based on **acceptance of G-d's yoke,** the verse, **nevertheless,** speaks of **"proceed[ing],"** i.e., advancing (***teileichu***). Now, **the true concept of "proceeding"**

דָאס וָואס דֶער פָּסוּק זָאגְט בְּחֻקֹּתַי, כָאטשׁ עֶר מֵיינְט דָאךְ אַלֶע מִצְוֹת, וַוייְל עֶר אִיז מְרַמֵּז, אַז אוֹיךְ עֵדוֹת און מִשְׁפָּטִים, הֲגַם זֵיי הָאבְּן אַן אָרְט אִין שֵׂכֶל, דַארְף מֶען זֵיי אָבֶּער מְקַיֵּים זַיְין מִצַּד קַבָּלַת עֹל, פּוּנְקְט ווִי דֶער קִיּוּם פוּן חֻקִּים - חֻקָּה חָקַקְתִּי גְּזֵרָה גָּזַרְתִּי.

און כָאטשׁ דֶער קִיּוּם הַמִּצְווֹת אִיז נִיט מִצַּד הַשֵּׂכֶל נָאר מִצַּד קַבָּלַת עֹל, פוּנְדֶעסְטְווֶעגְן אִיז אִין דֶעם דָא אַ תַּעֲנוּג, און אַדְּרַבָּה, דֶער תַּעֲנוּג אִיז נָאךְ אַ גְרֶעסֶערֶער, ווִי עֶס אִיז בַּאוואוּסְט[ז] ווֶעגְן דֶעם עִנְיָן פוּן עֲבוֹדַת עֶבֶד נֶאֱמָן און עֶבֶד פָּשׁוּט, אַז דֶער תַּעֲנוּג פוּן עֶבֶד אִיז דָאס דֶער תַּעֲנוּג הָאָדוֹן.

וואָס דָאס אִיז מְרוּמָּז אִין דֶעם ווָארְט "תֵּלֵכוּ", אַז כָאטשׁ עֶס אִיז "בְּחֻקֹּתַי", קַבָּלַת עֹל, פוּנְדֶעסְטְווֶעגְן אִיז - "תֵּלֵכוּ", ווָאס דֶער אֱמֶת'עֶר עִנְיָן פוּן גֵיין אִיז

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10. Indeed, the commitment to understand the intellectual motivation for the *mitzvos* must also come from *kabbalas ol,* for it is G-d's will that we fulfill His *mitzvos* while motivated by mind and heart (see *Likkutei Sichos,* Vol. 3, p. 153, *et al*).

11. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 19:1; *Midrash Tanchuma* (Buber ed.) *Parshas Chukas,* sec. 4.

12. *Yoma* 67b. Quite often, the Rebbe would link this quote and the one referred to in the previous footnote together. See *Toras Menachem,* Vol. 18, p. 32, Vol. 22, p. 141, *et al.*

13. See the *maamar* entitled *Acharei Havayah Elokeichem,* the series of *maamarim* entitled *Yom Tov shel Rosh HaShanah, 5666,* and the *maamar* entitled *VaYolech,* 5704.

14. As explained in the above sources, a simple servant is entirely devoted to his master; his identity is completely subsumed in that of his master. The actions he performs on behalf of his master are considered as if performed by the master himself. As such, the servant shares in the feelings of pleasure his master experiences in the completion of the task; he feels it as his own pleasure. Similarly in the analogue, the Divine pleasure aroused by our observance of the *mitzvos* can be felt by a person who dedicates himself to G-d with *kabbalas ol.*

involves an unbounded advance.[15] Such progress **cannot stem from** a person's **internal powers** of intellect and emotion, because they are, by nature, **limited. Instead, they must be sourced in** the soul's **encompassing powers, including pleasure,** enabling us to proceed further in our Divine service with energy and **vitality.**

The word *im* – G-d's entreaty and promise – refers not only to the actual fulfillment of the commandments but also to the manner in which the commandments are fulfilled: By stating, **"Would you follow My statutes,"** G-d is asking but also **assuring all Jews that we will fulfill the commandments with the vitality that comes from the acceptance of G-d's yoke.**

דָאךְ בְּלִי גְבוּל[ח], קֶען עֶס נִיט קוּמֶען מִצַּד פְּנִימִיּוּת׳דִיקֶע און בַּאגְרֶענֶעצְטֶע כֹּחוֹת, נָאר מִצַּד כֹּחַ מַקִּיף, תַּעֲנוּג, חַיּוּת.

און דֶער וָוארְט "אִם", דִי תַּחֲנוּנִים און הַבְטָחָה פוּן דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן, גֵייט נִיט נָאר אוֹיף דֶעם גוּף פוּן קִיּוּם הַמִּצְוֹת נָאר אוֹיךְ אוֹיפְן אוֹפֶן פוּן קִיּוּם הַמִּצְוֹת: "בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ", אַז יֶעדֶער אִיד אִיז מוּבְטָח אַז עֶר וֶועט מְקַיֵּים זַיְין מִצְוֹת מִיטְן חַיּוּת פוּן קַבָּלַת עֹל.

A Succession of Blessings

4. The reward for serving G-d with such selfless devotion **is** that G-d **"will give your rains in their season…."**[16] This connotes **rain in the spiritual sense, which refers to** the Torah, as it is stated,[17] **"My teaching shall drop like rain," and in an even loftier sense,** not only the intellectual element of the Torah, but also **the light of the Torah, and loftier still, the Torah that *Mashiach* will teach, for the Torah of the present era is like nothing when compared to the Torah of *Mashiach*.**[18]

Such study will also lead to an even greater measure of blessing of **"rains in their season," in the literal physical sense.**

Since these rains are a result of the Jews' Divine service, **these material** blessings **will be of such a nature that not only will they not interfere with our Divine service, but, on the contrary, they will assist it.** As Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak clarified,[19] he had not been able to give a proper answer to a query regarding Torah law, because "I had yet to **eat the meat of an ox…."** (In other words, **until he had eaten meat, his**

ד. דֶער שְׂכַר אוֹיף דֶעם אִיז, "וְנָתַתִּי גִשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעִתָּם" וגו׳ - גֶשֶׁם בְּרוּחְנִיּוּת, וָואס דָאס אִיז דֶער יַעֲרוֹף כַּמָּטָר לִקְחִי און נָאךְ הֶעכֶער, דֶער אוֹר תּוֹרָה, און נָאךְ הֶעכֶער, דִי תּוֹרָה וָואס מָשִׁיחַ וֶועט לֶערְנֶען, וָואס דִי תּוֹרָה פוּן אִיצְטֶער אִיז הֶבֶל לְגַבֵּי תּוֹרָתוֹ שֶׁל מָשִׁיחַ[ט].

און דוּרְךְ דֶעם אוֹיךְ: גִשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעִתָּם, בְּגַשְׁמִיּוּת כִּפְשׁוּטוֹ.

און דִי גַשְׁמִיּוּת וֶועט זַיְין אִין אַזָא אוֹפֶן, אַז נִיט נָאר וָואס זִי וֶועט נִיט אָפְּהאַלְטְן פוּן עֲבוֹדַת הֲוָיָ׳, נָאר אַדְּרַבָּה, זִי וֶועט נָאךְ צוּהֶעלְפְן, וִוי עֶס שְׁטֵייט[י], עַד דְּלָא אֲכִילְנָא בִּשְׂרָא דְתוֹרָא כו׳ (אַז בִּיז עֶר עֶסְט נִיט קֵיין פְלֵייש אִיז בַּיי אִים זַיְין גֶעדַאנְק נִיט גֶענוּג

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15. See *Likkutei Torah, Vayikra* 45a.

16. *Vayikra* 26:4.

17. *Devarim* 32:2.

18. *Koheles Rabbah* 11:8.

19. *Bava Kama* 72a.

לויטֶער), אַז מִיט דִי גַשְׁמִיּוּת וועט מֶען דִינֶען דֶעם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן מִתּוֹךְ מְנוּחַת הַנֶּפֶשׁ וְהַרְחָבַת הַדַּעַת.

thoughts were not sufficiently clear.) Similarly, **the material blessings** which our Divine service generate will enable us to **serve G-d with peace of mind and breadth of understanding.**

א) עבודה זרה ה, א. זע אויך תורת כהנים אויף דער פרשה.

ב) פירוש רש"י על התורה מתורת כהנים.

ג) שמואל ב יד, יד.

ד) תורה אור פו, ג.

ה) תניא פרק ד. וראה גם כן פירוש על הרמב"ם הלכות יסודי התורה ריש פרק ב.

ו) זע תרגום אונקלוס ותרגום יונתן. אור החיים פירוש כה. ועוד.

ז) ד"ה אחרי ה' אלקיכם תרס"ו. ד"ה ויולך תש"ד.

ח) זע לקוטי תורה אנפאנג בחקותי.

ט) קהלת רבה פרשה יא.

י) בבא קמא עב, א.

BECHUKOSAI II | בחוקותי ב

Adapted from a *sichah* delivered on *Shabbos Parshas Behar-Bechukosai,* 5716 (1956)

Introduction

At the heart of religious belief lie two fundamental principles:

a) First, the conviction that G-d is inherently and entirely good, as our Sages teach,[1] "No evil descends from Above." Everything that comes from the Divine is, in essence, good and purposeful.

b) Second, the belief in *Hashgachah Pratis* (Divine Providence) – that nothing in our lives happens by chance. Every event and every circumstance is specifically directed by G-d with conscious intent.

These two cornerstone beliefs are tested when confronted with the harsh realities of suffering, illness, or loss. We struggle to reconcile how a good G-d, who directs every detail of our lives, allows experiences that are unmistakably painful.

At the time of crisis, the issue does not bother us on the abstract, theological plane. It becomes an intensely personal matter, one that challenges our very core.[2]

In the *sichah* that follows, the Rebbe does not attempt to resolve the philosophical query. He does, however, offer several possible solutions for individuals to apply in their own Divine service.

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1. *Bereishis Rabbah* 51:3.

2. The Rebbe delivered this *sichah* in the aftermath of a terrorist attack on a trade school in Kfar Chabad, Israel, in 1956 when five students and their counselor were killed. Shaken by the tragedy, Lubavitch chassidim in *Eretz Yisrael* and worldwide sought guidance from the Rebbe. This *sichah* was delivered as part of a more extensive discussion of the subject.

Finding the Blessing Within

When a Curse Is a Blessing

1. In *Likkutei Torah* on this week's Torah portion,[1] the Alter Rebbe explains that all the verses that appear as curses **are, in truth, blessings. (For example, the verse,[2] "Ten women will bake their bread in a single oven," is interpreted as meaning that all ten powers of the soul will be "baked"** – warmed and inspired by – G-d's **oneness.) However, since these blessings are so lofty, they could not be revealed openly. Therefore, they are expressed in this** concealed **manner.**

In his notes on the *maamar* **mentioned above, the *Tzemach Tzedek* explains that this is also the meaning of the story in the Talmud[3] regarding Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai,** who sent **his son to Rabbi Yonasan ben Asmai and Rabbi Yehudah ben Gerim to receive their blessings. When** his son **came back to Rabbi Shimon, he repeated their words to his father, lamenting that what they told him appeared to be the opposite of blessings. Rabbi Shimon replied that** their words **were all blessings and explained** how **this was true.**

The question begs to be asked: **Why did they bless him using such language that could be interpreted differently? *Maharsha*[4] explains that this was done to sharpen his understanding (*lechadudei*).** However, **the *Tzemach Tzedek* states that, more likely, the** story should be un-

א. אִין לִקוּטֵי תּוֹרָה פוּן הַיְינְטִיקֶער סֶדְרָה[א] ווֶערְט דֶערְקְלֶערְט, אַז אַלֶע עִנְיָנִים פוּן תּוֹכָחָה זַיְינֶען בֶּאֱמֶת בְּרָכוֹת (לְדוּגְמָא: וְאָפוּ עֶשֶׂר נָשִׁים לַחְמְכֶם בְּתַנּוּר אֶחָד, אִיז דֶער פְּשַׁט אַז אַלֶע עֶשֶׂר כֹּחוֹת הַנֶּפֶשׁ ווֶעלְן זַיְין אוֹיסְגֶעקָאכְט אִין "אֶחָד") - נָאר אַזוֹי ווִי זֵיי זַיְינֶען גָאר הוֹיכֶע בְּרָכוֹת, קֶענֶען זֵיי נִיט אַרָאפְּקוּמֶען בְּגִילוּי, דֶערְפַאר זַיְינֶען זֵיי גֶעזָאגְט גֶעווָארְן אִין אַזַא אוֹפֶן.

דֶער צֶמַח צֶדֶק בְּרֶענְגְט דָארְט אִין אַ הַגָּהָ"ה, אַז דָאס אִיז אוֹיךְ דֶער פְּשַׁט אִין דֶער דֶערְצֵיילוּנְג פוּן גְמָרָא[ב], אַז רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי הָאט גֶעשִׁיקְט זַיְין זוּן צוּ רַבִּי יוֹנָתָן בן עַסְמַיי אוּן רַבִּי יוּדָא בֶּן גֵּרִים זֵיי זָאלְן אִים בֶּענְטשְׁן. ווֶען עֶר אִיז גֶעקוּמֶען צוּ רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹנ'עֶן, אִיבֶּערְגֶעגֶעבְּן ווָאס זֵיי הָאבְּן אִים גֶעזָאגְט, אוּן בַּאקְלָאגְט זִיךְ אַז אִין פְּלוּג זַיְינֶען דָאס עִנְיָנִים ווָאס זַיְינֶען הֵיפֶךְ פוּן בְּרָכוֹת, הָאט אִים רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן גֶעזָאגְט אַז בֶּאֱמֶת זַיְינֶען דָאס אַלְץ בְּרָכוֹת, אוּן הָאט אִים דִי אַלֶע בְּרָכוֹת דֶערְקְלֶערְט.

אִיז אִין פְּלוּג, פַארְווָאס טַאקֶע הָאבְּן זֵיי אִים גֶעבֶּענְטשְׁט מִיט אַזַא לָשׁוֹן ווָאס מֶען קֶען אוֹיסְטַיְיטשְׁן אַנְדֶערְשׁ? זָאגְט אוֹיף דֶעם דֶער מַהַרְשָׁ"א אַז דָאס אִיז גֶעווֶען לְחַדּוּדֵי. דֶער צֶמַח צֶדֶק זָאגְט, אַז יוֹתֵר נִרְאֶה כִּפְשׁוּטוֹ, ווַיְילֶע דָאס זַיְינֶען

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1. The *maamar* entitled *Beshivri Lachem Mateh Lechem* (*Likkutei Torah, Vayikra,* p. 48a ff.).

2. *Vayikra* 26:26.

3. *Moed Katan* 9a-b.

4. *Chiddushei Aggados* on the passage cited above.

derstood **straightforwardly: Since these were such lofty blessings** – too sublime to be expressed directly – **they had to be conveyed in this** veiled **manner.**

גֶעוועֶן גָאר הוֹיכֶע בְּרָכוֹת הָאט עֶס גֶעמוּזְט אַרָאפְּקוּמֶען אִין אַזַא אוֹפֶן.

Souls that Can Lift the Veil

2. On the surface, since these were such lofty blessings that they had to be conveyed in a disguised manner, why did Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai interpret them to his son? Seemingly, these lofty blessings were meant to remain concealed.

ב. אִין פְּלוּג, וויִבַּאלְד אַז דָאס זַיְינֶען הוֹיכֶע בְּרָכוֹת וועֶלְכֶע מוּזְן קוּמֶען פַּארְשְׁטֶעלְט, וויִ אַזוֹי הָאט זַיי רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי גֶעקֶענְט אוֹיסְטַיְיטְשְׁן בְּגִילוּי?

This can be understood according to the explanation in *Tanya*,[5] that what appears as **suffering is goodness** that emanates **from the "concealed world" (*alma d'iskasya*), the level of *Yud-Hei*** (the first two letters of G-d's name *Havayah*).[6] **Due to** its lofty source, **at present, goodness** stemming from that level **comes down "in the form of a shadow rather than as visible light and goodness."** By **accepting** such **suffering with joy, one will merit "the sun going forth in its might,"[7] which will occur in the Ultimate Future, when this goodness will be revealed in a visible and manifest form.**

וועֶט מֶען עֶס פַּארְשְׁטֵיין לוֹיט וויִ עֶס ווערְט דֶערְקְלֶערְט אִין תַּנְיָא[יג], אַז יִסוּרִים זַיְינֶען טוֹב פוּן עָלְמָא דְאִתְכַּסְיָא, בְּחִינַת י־ה, דֶערְפַאר קוּמְט עֶס אִיצְטֶער אַרָאפּ "בִּבְחִינַת צֵל וְלֹא אוֹרָה וְטוֹבָה נִרְאֵית", אוּן דוּרְךְ דֶעם וואָס מֶען אִיז מְקַבֵּל דִי יִסוּרִים בְּשִׂמְחָה, אִיז מֶען זוֹכֶה צוּם "כְּצֵאת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בִּגְבוּרָתוֹ"[יד], וואָס וועֶט זַיְין לֶעָתִיד, וואָס דַאן וועֶט עֶס אַרָאפְּקוּמֶען בְּטוֹב הַנִּרְאֶה וְהַנִּגְלֶה.

There are **souls whose purpose is to reveal the inner dimensions of Torah. The revelation of the Future Era shines within these** souls, **even at present.**[8] **Therefore, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, whose purpose was to reveal the inner dimensions of Torah, was able to interpret these blessings openly, since the** light of **"the sun going forth in its might" was already shining for him.** Accordingly, **even in his time, he was able to see the blessings within** what appeared as curses and bring them to a revealed state.

דִי נְשָׁמוֹת וואָס עִנְיָנָם אִיז צוּ מְגַלֶּה זַיְין פְּנִימִיוּת הַתּוֹרָה, אִיז בַּיי זַיי אוֹיךְ אִיצְטֶער מֵאִיר דֶער גִילוּי פוּן לֶעָתִיד[טו]. דֶערְפַאר אִיז רַשְׁבִּ"י וואָס זַיְין עִנְיָן אִיז גֶעוועֶן צוּ אַנְטְפְּלֶעקְן פְּנִימִיוּת הַתּוֹרָה, הָאט עֶר גֶעקֶענְט אוֹיסְטַיְיטְשְׁן דִי בְּרָכוֹת בְּגִילוּי, וַוויְילֶע בַּיי אִים הָאט שׁוֹין מֵאִיר גֶעוועֶן דֶער כְּצֵאת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בִּגְבוּרָתוֹ, הָאט עֶר אוֹיךְ אִיצְטֶער שׁוֹין גֶעזֶען אִין דֶעם דִי בְּרָכוֹת.

This is why the interpretation of the *tocheichah* (the series of apparent curses in this Torah reading) **as blessings is found specifically in *Chassidus*** – since

דֶערִיבֶּער קוּמְט דִי אוֹיסְ־טַיְיטְשׁוּנְג פוּן דֶער תּוֹכָחָה וויִ

5. *Tanya,* ch. 26.

6. G-d's name *Havayah* alludes to the transcendent aspects of G-dliness. The first two letters of that name *yud* and *hei* refer to the loftier, concealed dimension of that four-letter name.

7. *Shoftim* 5:31, cited in *Shabbos* 88b, *Yoma* 23a, *Gittin* 36b.

8. See *Likkutei Sichos,* Vol. 1, p. 287.

its teachings **reveal the inner dimensions of Torah,** *Chassidus* has the potential to reveal the inner good that exists within what appear to be curses.

בְּרָכוֹת - אִין חֲסִידוּת דַוְקָא, וָואס בְּרֶ־עֶנְגְט פְּנִימִיּוּת הַתּוֹרָה בְּגִילּוּי.

Sharing the Gift of Inner Vision

3. The ability to **interpret** curses as **blessings is connected with the inner dimensions of Torah.** Accordingly, **just as Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai** had been given the power to **reveal the inner dimensions of Torah to everyone, so too,** his mission involved **interpreting these blessings to his son, who was not yet at such a high spiritual level.**

ג. ווִיבַּאלְד אַז דֶער אוֹיסְטַײטְשׁ פוּן דִי בְּרָכוֹת אִיז פַארְבּוּנְדְן מִיט פְּנִימִיּוּת הַתּוֹרָה, אִיז אַזוֹי ווִי פְּנִימִיּוּת הַתּוֹרָה הָאט דָאךְ רַשְׁבִּ״י מְגַלֶּה גֶעווֶען צוּ אַלֶעמֶען, אַזוֹי אוֹיךְ דִי בְּרָכוֹת, הָאט עֶר אוֹיסְגֶעטַײטְשְׁט אוֹיךְ צוּ זַײן זוּן, וָואס אִיז דַאן נָאךְ נִיט גֶעווֶען אוֹיף אַזַא הוֹיכֶע מַדְרֵיגָה,

The fact that Rabbi Shimon's son was not on his father's level is evident from **the Talmud's wording, "he said to his son," without mentioning the son's name.**[9] **Further proof comes from the fact that Rabbi Shimon sent his son to receive a blessing from Rabbi Yonasan ben Asmai and Rabbi Yehudah ben Gerim** to facilitate his spiritual growth. Although the son was on a lower level, **Rabbi Shimon revealed these blessings to him as well.**

- וָואס דֶערְפַאר זָאגְט דִי גְמָרָא אָמַר לֵיהּ לִבְרֵיהּ אוּן רוּפְט אִים נִיט בַּײ זַײן נָאמֶען[טז]. אַ ווַײטֶערְדִיקֶע הוֹכָחָה אִיז פוּן דֶעם וָואס עֶר הָאט אִים גֶעשִׁיקְט מְקַבֵּל זַײן אַ בְּרָכָה פוּן רַבִּי יוֹנָתָן בֶּן עַמְסַיי אוּן רַבִּי יְהוּדָא בֶּן גֵּרִים -

אוּן פוּנְדֶעסְטְווֶעגְן הָאט עֶר אוֹיךְ אִים מְגַלֶּה גֶעווֶען דִי בְּרָכוֹת.

Confronting and Overcoming Adversity vs. Transcending It Entirely

4. Extending the above concept further, the Alter Rebbe offers **guidance on how to deal with suffering in three places in *Tanya*: once in the first part of *Tanya* and twice in *Igeres HaKodesh*.**

ד. אִין דְרַײ עֶרְטֶער אִין תַּנְיָא ווֶערְט דֶערְקְלֶערְט דִי עֵצָה צוּ יִסוּרִים. אֵיין מָאל אִין עֶרְשְׁטְן חֵלֶק תַּנְיָא אוּן צְווֵיי מָאל אִין אִגֶּרֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ.

In the first part of *Tanya*,[5] he states that the advice for dealing with suffering is to accept it with joy. Through such joy, we **will merit that, in the Ultimate Future,** our suffering **will be transformed into revealed and manifest good. Nevertheless, this approach requires waiting for the Ultimate Future.**

אִין עֶרְשְׁטְן חֵלֶק תַּנְיָא[יז] שְׁטֵייט, אַז דִי עֵצָה צוּ יִסוּרִים אִיז לְקַבְּלֵי בְּשִׂמְחָה, וָואס דוּרְךְ דֶעם ווֶעט עֶר זוֹכֶה זַײן אַז לֶעָתִיד לָבוֹא ווֶעט עֶס אַרָאפְּקוּמֶען בְּטוֹב הַנִּרְאֶה וְהַנִּגְלֶה.

דָאס אִיז דָאךְ אָבֶּער אַן עִנְיָן וָואס מֶען דַארְף ווַארְטְן אוֹיף לֶעָתִיד לָבוֹא.

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9. See the beginning of *Sanhedrin* 41b. That passage indicates that a Sage was referred to only by his father's name and not by his own name prior to attaining significant stature.

In one place in *Igeres HaKodesh*,[10] the Alter Rebbe **offers** different **advice: to examine our conduct carefully.**[11] When we are confronted by adversity, we **should** search our conduct until we discover the misdeeds for which we are being punished and **reflect on how the "great King is washing away the filth of His only son [Israel], as it is written,**[12] **'When G-d will wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion....'" Such cleansing results from G-d's great love.**

There is a fundamental emotional tendency: "**As water reflects a face, so too, is the heart of a man to a man,**"[13] i.e., when one person shows love to another, the other will instinctively respond with love. If this is true between man and man, how much more so does it apply when G-d shows love. Contemplating the great love G-d shows by cleansing our misdeeds will **awaken love for G-d within our** hearts. **This will elicit a response from Above, causing G-d's love to become revealed love.** Such love **will, in turn, be manifest also on this material plane in visible and evident good.**

With **this approach, we need not wait for the Ultimate Future; we can experience visible and evident good even now. Nevertheless, this approach** is not so simple; it **does require contemplation and an awakening of love for G-d.**

In the second source in *Igeres HaKodesh*,[14] the Alter Rebbe **offers** another path to deal with adversity: **To recognize that** suffering **represents a trial. We are being tested to determine whether we desire the matters of this world and the life of the body,** in other words, physical pleasures and the like. **By withstanding this test,** the suffering is **transformed into visible and evident good.**

The advantage of this approach is that we need not wait for an arousal of love and the like and suffer in the meantime (G-d forbid). Rather, as soon

אִין אִגֶּרֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ אִין אֵיין אָרְט[ח], גִיט עֶר דִי עֵצָה, לְפַשְׁפֵּשׁ בְּמַעֲשָׂיו. עֶר זָאל זִיךְ בַּאטְרַאכְטְן ווִי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַגָּדוֹל רוֹחֵץ צוֹאַת בְּנוֹ יְחִידוֹ, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב[ט] אִם רָחַץ ה׳ אֵת צוֹאַת בְּנוֹת צִיּוֹן גו׳, ווָאס דָאס קוּמְט דָאךְ מִצַּד דֶער אַהֲבָה רַבָּה שֶׁלְמַעְלָה, ווָאס דוּרְךְ דֶער הִתְבּוֹנְנוּת אִיז כַּמַּיִם הַפָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים ווֶעט עֶר מְעוֹרֵר זַיְין דִי אַהֲבָה בַּיי זִיךְ צוּם אוֹיבֶּערְשְׁטְן, ווָאס דוּרְךְ דֶעם ווֶעט עֶר מַמְשִׁיךְ זַיְין לְמַעְלָה, אַז דִי אַהֲבָה ווֶעט זַיְין אַן אַהֲבָה מְגוּלָּה, ווָאס בְּמֵילָא ווֶעט עֶס אַרָאפְּקוּמֶען אוֹיךְ לְמַטָּה בְּטוֹב הַנִּרְאֶה וְהַנִּגְלֶה.

דִי עֵצָה, כָאטשׁ אַז מֶען דַארְף טַאקֶע נִיט ווַארְטְן אוֹיף לֶעָתִיד, עֶר קֶען הָאבְּן טוֹב הַנִּרְאֶה וְהַנִּגְלֶה אוֹיךְ אִיצְטֶער, דַארְף מֶען אָבֶּער צוּ אִיר הָאבְּן הִתְבּוֹנְנוּת אוּן הִתְעוֹרְרוּת אַהֲבַת הֲוָיָ׳ וכו׳.

אִין צְווֵייטְן אָרְט אִין אִגֶּרֶת הַקֹּדֶשׁ[י], גִיט עֶר דִי עֵצָה, מֶען זָאל ווִיסְן אַז דָאס אִיז אַן עִנְיָן פוּן נִסְיוֹנוֹת, מֶען פְּרוּאווְט אוֹיס דֶעם מֶענְטשְׁן צִי עֶר הָאט אַ רָצוֹן אִין עִנְיְנֵי עוֹלָם הַזֶּה אוּן חַיֵּי הַגּוּף. אוּן דוּרְךְ דֶעם ווָאס עֶר שְׁטֵייט בַּיי דֶעם נִסָּיוֹן, קוּמְט עֶס אַרָאפּ אִין טוֹב הַנִּרְאֶה וְהַנִּגְלֶה.

דִי מַעֲלָה אִין דֶער עֵצָה אִיז, אַז מֶען דַארְף נִיט ווַארְטְן אוֹיף הִתְעוֹרְרוּת אַהֲבָה וכו׳, אוּן בִּיז דֶעמָאלְט לַיְידְן יִסּוּרִים חַס וְשָׁלוֹם,

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10. ***Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh,* Epistle 22.**

11. Cf. *Berachos* 5a, *et al.*

12. ***Yeshayahu* 4:4.**

13. *Mishlei* 27:19.

14. ***Tanya, Igeres HaKodesh,* Epistle 11.**

as we withstand the test, we are freed from suffering. Another advantage is that even a small amount of suffering is sufficient, because a person can be tested even with a little suffering. As soon as it is seen that the suffering does not affect him, it will be removed. Nevertheless, this approach **still requires withstanding the test.**

The advantage of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's approach – revealing **the inner dimensions of the Torah – however, is that we need not wait for the Ultimate Future, nor for an awakening of love, nor for withstanding tests. Rather, through the inner dimensions of Torah, we immediately interpret and reveal every matter as visible and evident good.**[15]

נָאר בַּאלְד ווִי מֶען שְׁטֵייט בַּיי דֶעם נִסָּיוֹן, ווֶערְט מֶען פָּטוּר פוּן יִסוּרִים. אוֹיךְ אִיז דִי מַעֲלָה אִין דֶעם, אַז עֶס אִיז גֶענוּג אוֹיךְ אַ בִּיסְל יִסוּרִים, ווָארוּם אוֹיךְ מִיט אַ בִּיסְל קֶען מֶען אִים אוֹיסְפְּרוּאווְן, אוּן בַּאלְד ווִי מֶען זֶעט אַז עֶר ווֶערְט נִיט נִתְפָּעֵל פוּן דֶעם, נֶעמְט מֶען דָאס צוּ פוּן אִים.

אָבֶּער פוּנְדֶעסְטְווֶעגְן, דַארְף מֶען דָאךְ דָא בַּיְישְׁטֵיין דֶעם נִסָּיוֹן.

דִי מַעֲלָה פוּן רַשְׁבִּ"י אוּן פְּנִימִיּוּת הַתּוֹרָה אָבֶּער אִיז, אַז מֶען דַארְף נִיט וואַרְטְן אוֹיף לֶעָתִיד, נִיט אוֹיף הִתְעוֹרְרוּת אַהֲבָה וכו', אוּן נִיט אוֹיף בַּיְישְׁטֵיין נִסְיוֹנוֹת, נָאר מִצַּד פְּנִימִיּוּת הַתּוֹרָה טַייְטְשְׁט מֶען אוֹיס, בַּאלְד, אוּן מֶען אִיז מְגַלֶּה יֶעדֶער עִנְיָן, בְּטוֹב הַנִּרְאֶה וְהַנִּגְלֶה[כא].

15. **Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's** conduct provides us with an example of this approach. As **the *Zohar,* Vol. III, p. 59b,** relates, in a period of drought, Rabbi Shimon was able to **bring rain immediately by reciting** teachings of *pnimiyus* ***haTorah.*** Unlike other Sages in a similar situation, he did not declare **a fast, pray,** or resort to **other** similar **activities.**

יא) ד"ה בשברי לכם מטה לחם.
יב) מועד קטן ט, א.
יג) פרק כו.
יד) שופטים ה, לא. שבת פח, ב. יומא כג, א. גיטין לו, ב.
טו) זע ווייטער סעיף יד און ווייטער.
טז) זע סנהדרין מא, ע"ב אין אנפאנג.
יז) פרק כו.
יח) סימן כב.
יט) ישעי' ד, ד.
כ) סימן יא.
כא) בדוגמת רשב"י'ס ברענגען רעגן גלייך דורך זאָגן תורה, אָן תעניות, תפלות וכו' (זהר חלק ג נט, ב).

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